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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/23/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: TURKISH LOGISTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO COALITION  
EFFORTS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Incirlik Air Base (IAB) in southern Turkey has been a strategic asset to coalition efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan since the first Gulf War. Current Turkish authorization to use IAB as air-refueling, cargo transit and FAA navigation aid operation hubs has saved the US hundreds of millions of dollars annually in air transit costs and is a critical resource for the distribution of equipment and fuel to US troops. Additionally, Turkey has provided blanket overflight clearances in support of humanitarian efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan and authorized overland and sea retrograde of US military equipment from Turkey. The Turkish Council of Ministers decrees authorizing all of these operations must be renewed annually and will expire on June 22, 2007. The timing of this expiration, immediately following a possible congressional Armenian genocide resolution, may place the continuation of critical logistical operations at risk. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Incirlik Air Base has been an important strategic asset for the United States since the 1950s, when, among other things, it served as a home to U-2 reconnaissance aircraft that flew over the USSR. Its importance has continued to more modern times. From the initiation of Operations Provide Comfort (1991-1996) and Northern Watch (1997-2003), IAB has provided a critical logistics link in the Global War on Terrorism. Currently three separate US operations in support of coalition efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan are based at Incirlik:

1A. (C) Air-Refueling Operations: Beginning on July 1, 2003, the Turkish government authorized the US to stage up to 10 KC-135 tanker aircraft (and up to 12 on a temporary basis for rotation purposes) for the conduct of air-refueling operations for US military aircraft on non-lethal missions in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Since that time, the operation has flown over 3,800 sorties and delivered over 40 million gallons of fuel to fighter and transport aircraft. The current authorization, which has been renewed annually, will expire on Logistics Hub: On April 2007, the US will base a Logistics Hub in Europe. To primarily serve Iraq but also Turkey. The establishment of this hub to replace flights from Germany to Iraq allows the use of six C-17s to do the work previously done by 9-10 aircraft, saving the US about \$160M per year. According to the agreement, the US can station up to six C-17s at IAB (or up to eight on a temporary basis) along with up to 150 temporary duty personnel plus security and crews for six aircraft. The agreement, like that for the air-refueling operation, will expire on June 22.

However, this agreement also contains a clause allowing the Turkish government to "suspend or permanently cease" the use of IAB as a logistics hub before the expiration date with 72 hour prior notification.

Note: (SBU) Since the beginning of operations on May 18, 2005, over 1800 contract commercial flights have brought over 250 million pounds of cargo including medical supplies and equipment, add-on armor, construction equipment and materials, fuels, lubricants, clothing, tents, gear and more to Incirlik for transit via C-17 to US troops in Iraq. Hub flights have also been utilized to facilitate the emergency evacuation of US soldiers from Iraq.

¶C. (C) FAA Navigational Aid Checks: On June 6, 2005, the US was authorized to stage one BAE Hawker 125-800 or Canadair CL-600 Challenger aircraft out of IAB up to 8 times per year for a maximum of 2-3 weeks each time for the purpose of traveling to Iraq to inspect navigational aids. This agreement, like the other two, will expire on June 22. The NavAid Check authority, like the cargo hub agreement, was drafted in 2005 and contains a clause authorizing suspension or permanent cessation of the operation by Turkey at any time with 72 hours prior notification.

¶3. (C) Blanket Overflight Clearances: Turkey has granted three blanket overflight clearances for flights in support of reconstruction and humanitarian efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan: OEF Overflight Clearance (granted in 2001), OIF

¶4. (C) Retrograde Authority: On October 16, 2006, Turkey authorized the retrograde of non-lethal/non-hazardous US military equipment out of Iraq by Turkish carriers via Turkish roadways and select sea ports. This authority, which has not yet been utilized, will also expire on June 22, 2007 and, like the Logistics Hub and NavAid agreements, contains a clause stating that "in the cases as it is deemed necessary, the said activities would be delayed temporarily or ceased permanently by notification of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey."

¶5. (C) Habur Gate GLOC: Turkey allows the use of the Habur Gate border crossing into Iraq for the transit of fuel for coalition troops and for the Iraqi people. Almost 25% of coalition fuel and 50% of fuel for the Iraqi people transits the Habur Gate into Iraq. While the authority to transit the fuel through Habur is not contained in an agreement with a specific end date, the Turkish government could unilaterally restrict that access at any time.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Historically we have initiated the agreement renewal process in April. This timing is coincidental with the potential passage of a US congressional resolution on an Armenian genocide. If the TGS response to the French Lower Assembly's approval of a bill criminalizing denial of an Armenian genocide is any indication, Turkey's timely renewal of these authorities cannot be guaranteed. The US military has identified workarounds for the IAB operations but at triple the current cost, at least initially. Per standard practice, mission will, in coordination with appropriate USG agencies, seek to renew our IAB arrangements. We will also make contingency plans, and encourage USG agencies to do likewise, to continue the IAB operations to the greatest extent possible on the basis of individual flight requests. END COMMENT.

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